

# South Oxfordshire LOCAL PLAN 2031

## REFINED OPTIONS CONSULTATION CONSULTATION REPORT

JULY 2015



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South Oxfordshire

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**South Oxfordshire District Council  
Local Plan 2031 Refined Options  
Consultation**

**Consultation Report  
July 2015**



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## Executive Summary

### BACKGROUND

In February 2015 we published our “Local Plan 2031 – Refined Options” consultation document. This was the second step in creating a new Local Plan for the district. The Refined Options is an additional phase in developing the Local Plan 2031 and is effectively a part two of the Issues and Scope work to help us refine the wide range of issues in the previous consultation before moving to the more formal ‘Preferred Options’ consultation.

What we considered to be the best ideas from the Issues and Scope consultation have been moved forward in the Refined Options consultation, and options which we no longer see as contenders have been abandoned. The number of additional homes to meet our needs in the period up to 2031 was revised downwards in this consultation to account for the negative comments received in response to the higher levels of growth in the Issues and Scope consultation. Some specific suggestions were also made in relation to potential housing sites in the larger villages and for travelling communities.

The original consultation document for the Refined Options is still available from the council’s website via this link:

[http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2015-02-02\\_SODC%20LP2031%20REFINED%20OPTIONS%20DOCUMENT%20Final%20web%20ready\\_1.pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2015-02-02_SODC%20LP2031%20REFINED%20OPTIONS%20DOCUMENT%20Final%20web%20ready_1.pdf)

The consultation period ran from Thursday 19 February and to Thursday 2 April 2015, and as well as publishing the report online we held a number of events both in larger villages as exhibitions and with councillors – see the “How we consulted” section for more details.

### THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Overall we received 3,215 comments from 750 contributing individuals and organisations. This report summarises the main themes which came back to us from the consultation. Please note that we have not attempted to deal with every specific comment raised in a point-by-point manner – this is not necessary or appropriate at this stage of preparing the Local Plan, where we are trying to understand broad issues and identify the major concerns across the district.

Key points emerging from the consultation are as follows:

#### **The vision (question 1)**

- A mixed bag of responses – while the overall response was slightly more positive than negative, the positive responses usually came with suggestions for improvements, or additional points to cover.
- Common suggestions for improvement to the vision included giving greater emphasis to protecting the Green Belt around Oxford, emphasising early provision of infrastructure, and distributing additional housing ‘fairly’ (although there were many different views on what this might mean).

- The deliverability of the vision's ambitions was questioned, and some respondents still felt it could be made much more concise.

### **Appropriateness of the strategy to the vision (question 2)**

- As with Question 1, while the overall response was probably slightly positive, there were many more criticisms and suggestions made by the negative respondents.
- The main comments from those who looked favourably on the suggested strategy tended to be that housing growth should primarily be being directed to the places likely to see the greatest employment growth, while many also agreed that some growth spread more widely around the district would support the existing service centres.
- Those who disagreed with the strategic approach set out gave a number of reasons, including that there were too many homes being proposed, that the character of market towns and villages was already being changed [by Core Strategy and previous housing allocations], and that concentrating too much growth within the Science Vale area ran the risk of producing poorly-designed, poorly-connected, poorly-served estates.

### **Amount of new homes (question 3)**

- There was strong support for planning for more than 3,600 additional homes for South Oxfordshire's needs and 3,000 for Oxford City. However there were also numerous consultees supportive of a lower level of additional homes.
- The accuracy of both the number of additional homes for South Oxfordshire and Oxford City was frequently questioned. A high number of consultees also felt that South Oxfordshire should not be accommodating unmet housing need from Oxford City.

### **Housing distribution strategy (question 4)**

- There was strong support for the idea that the majority of growth should take place in Science Vale.
- A large proportion of consultees agreed that small villages should be included.
- A similar proportion also supported limited development in larger villages but noted that development should be proportional, appropriate and dependant on existing infrastructure.

### **Appropriate locations in Science Vale (question 5)**

- The greatest level of support was for development in Didcot.
- However, there were also suggestions that additional growth should be spread amongst the various villages in Science Vale as well as in Didcot, while others felt that the smaller settlements should be protected from any additional growth.
- There was a strong sense in a number of comments that the location of housing should be well related to access to employment, services and facilities.

### **Appropriate locations within and around the market towns and larger villages (question 6)**

- The most frequently raised response regarding the location of development was that brownfield sites should be used for housing.
- Other common themes were that the location of development should be decided by local people, through Neighbourhood Plans and that windfall sites should count towards the housing numbers needed.
- A number of people responded that both Thame and Wallingford should not take any more growth, and another frequently raised concern was that there should be no growth in the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

#### **Benson sites (question 7)**

- The choice of sites in Benson has been compromised by the appeal decision on BEN1 Littleworth Road site.
- There was support for development across a number of sites in Benson and also to fund a link road to divert some through traffic from the village.
- There was concern about the validity of the acoustic assessment undertaken in the village and some support for sites 7 and 8 which were eliminated as being too noisy.
- Additional sites suggested the re-use of redundant land at the air base.

#### **Chinnor sites (question 8)**

- There was limited support for the sites suggested in the consultation CHI7, CHI8 and CHI20 plus the garden centre site CHI9.
- Suggestions were made to reconsider sites CHI1, CHI2, CHI19, CHI21 and garden areas along Ickneild Way.
- Concern was expressed about the impacts on the landscape setting of the AONB, flood risk, historic assets, roads and traffic including neighbouring villages, water supply and sewerage.
- Limited support for more housing and against more housing in Chinnor was expressed.

#### **Cholsey sites (question 9)**

- CHOL2 was the most popular site. This was followed by CHOL1, then the three sites being developed together, and the least popular was CHOL3.
- There was very little objection to the shortlisted sites from the public or statutory consultees.
- Promoters of non-shortlisted sites (CHOL6, 7 and 8) made some fairly brief representations about why their sites should be re-considered.

#### **Crowmarsh sites (question 10)**

- The most popular site for development was the shortlisted site CRO6, followed by CRO7, then both sites developed together. There were also very low levels of objection to the shortlisted sites from individuals.
- Of the non-shortlisted sites, there was support for building housing on the fire-damaged council offices site.

#### **Goring sites (question 11)**



- The most frequently raised response was an objection to allocating GOR11 for development. Sites GOR1 and GOR2 both received considerable levels of support.

#### **Nettlebed sites (question 12)**

- The site that received the most support was NET3, with the many respondents stating they did not wish site NET1 allocated.

#### **Policies for smaller villages (question 13)**

- The majority of respondents agreed that policies for smaller villages should be relaxed to enable a small increase in the number of homes built.
- Many felt that the most appropriate mechanism for allowing housing in smaller villages was by preparing a neighbourhood plan and that allocating development should be allowed through the neighbourhood plan process.
- Respondents felt that development in smaller villages would help to support local services and facilities and result in a more sustainable distribution of development that would have a more balanced impact on infrastructure.
- Key concerns were having adequate infrastructure and maintaining the character of smaller villages.
- There was strong support to consider brownfield sites and utilising empty properties.

#### **Oxford's unmet housing need (question 14)**

- The Green Belt was discussed by over half the respondents, some in support of changing the boundaries and others objecting.
- A number of respondents questioned the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) findings and the validity of the claims that there is an unmet housing need arising from Oxford.
- Objections to each of the proposed sites were sent by a number of individuals with similar or identical messages. While some support was also received for the suggested sites and some alternative locations were suggested.
- There was quite a strong feeling that Oxford's unmet housing need should be accommodated in Oxford.

#### **Employment land (question 15)**

- There was a general view that housing and employment provision should be provided in close proximity.
- There was also a strong theme that employment should be provided in locations with good public transport connections, good road connections and with good parking.
- There was general support for the locations suggested in the Refined Options consultation, which were Monument Business Park, Culham Science Centre, Didcot Station area, the market towns and also some support for all employment to be in Science Vale.
- There was some support for smaller business premises across the district, home working and conversion of agricultural premises.

#### **Expanding and redeveloping town centres (question 16)**

- Focus should be on town centres not out-of-town shopping centres
- Old Waitrose site in Wallingford should be redeveloped
- Reasonable support for focus at Didcot

#### **Providing for travelling communities (question 17)**

- Many respondents felt that no new traveller sites should be allocated and instead that existing sites should be regularised and/or extended.
- Some respondents considered the Menmarsh scrapyards site to be unsuitable and there was a difference in opinion as to whether the site at Philips Tyres was appropriate.
- Some respondents felt that new sites should be distributed more evenly throughout the district.
- Other sites suggested by the respondents included – land adjacent to Monument Business Park, Chalgrove; Didcot Power Station; Chalgrove airfield; old council depots and abandoned airfields.

#### **Providing for older people (question 18)**

- The majority of respondents believed there was need for developments to be within a close proximity to town centre/amenities to ensure that the elderly would have the capacity to easily access local services and infrastructure.
- Respondents also supported the idea of providing smaller units to allow older persons to downsize.
- It was also mentioned that a mixture of design ranging from small to large scale homes are needed due to people's varying age, mobility and requirements.

#### **Other planning policies (question 19)**

- A number of consultees raised concerns about the level of additional houses required by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and put forward in the Local Plan.
- Some consultees stated that they would like to see an industry recognised standard for energy efficiency applied through policy to residential and commercial developments.
- Respondents also felt that the Green Belt and the AONB should be given greater protection through policy.

#### **Any other comments (question 20)**

- A wide variety of comments were given to question 20 with little consensus. The most commonly raised were comments relating to transport infrastructure, traffic, air pollution, and cycle routes.
- Other topics discussed included: protection of the AONB and green belt, Oxford City's unmet housing need, the consultation process, the level of housing need identified by the SHMA, and the aging population.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

We will use the responses to this consultation help prepare a 'Preferred Options' document which we will consult on in September and October 2015. This will show options for site allocations and new policies that we've considered and which ones we plan to take forward. In producing the Preferred Options document

we will test options through sustainability appraisal, looking at their traffic and landscape impact, at the need for schools, outdoor recreation and other facilities, and check their deliverability.

We have updated our Local Development Scheme to reflect the fact that our overall Local Plan timetable has been extended to take account of planning for unmet housing need from the City of Oxford. We are also updating our Statement of Community Involvement, to reflect the lessons learned from this and other consultations, and to ensure that we continue to reach people in efficient and effective ways.

All the comments received on the Refined Options consultation can be viewed on the council's website at:

<https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal/south/planning/pol/lp2031/ro/>.

General information about the new Local Plan, including further consultation documents and supporting studies, will be published on the council's website at:

[www.southoxon.gov.uk/newlocalplan](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/newlocalplan).

## Introduction

In February 2015 we published our “Local Plan 2031 – Refined Options” consultation document<sup>1</sup>. This was the second step in creating a new Local Plan for the district. The comments from the “Issues and Scope” consultation have informed the development of the Refined Options consultation. We also included some additional questions such as those relating to identifying appropriate allocation sites in the Larger Villages. We were also refining our approach to the need for the district to plan for a higher-level of housing than stated in the existing Core Strategy, which had been adopted in December 2012, and to start planning to help our neighbours meet their housing need. We also asked questions about a range of other matters including planning for jobs, how we could improve our town centres, and where we can accommodate travelling communities.

In this report we go through the Refined Options consultation document question by question and set out the main issues which were raised by respondents. We have not given a response to each individual comment you made; at this stage of preparing the new plan we wanted to tap into local knowledge to identify issues of interest and your thoughts on how we could shape our new plan. You can see all of the submitted comments can be seen on the council’s consultation website at <https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal/south/planning/pol/lp2031/is/lp>.

We have used the comments on this consultation, along with information from a range of studies we have carried out or commissioned, to narrow down the options for the new Local Plan. A “Preferred Options” consultation later in 2015 will show how we have used all this information to begin to shape a draft Local Plan with the intention to publish a formal pre-submission draft plan in Spring 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> The original consultation document is available from the council’s website: [http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2015-02-02\\_SODC%20LP2031%20REFINED%20OPTIONS%20DOCUMENT%20Final%20web%20ready\\_1.pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2015-02-02_SODC%20LP2031%20REFINED%20OPTIONS%20DOCUMENT%20Final%20web%20ready_1.pdf)

## **How we consulted**

The consultation took place from **19 February to 2 April 2015**, a period of six weeks. We also informally extended the consultation, so that responses received up to 10 April were accepted and processed, following requests from parish councils and statutory consultees who needed extra time to consider the questions.

We tried to ensure that we reached a wide spread of our community with our Refined Options consultation. Below a breakdown can be found of the different approaches used for the consultation. This consultation stage has also involved maintaining the partnership working arrangements we have identified with our larger villages, established with work on the earlier Local Plan Part Two.

We exceeded the statutory consultation requirements for this stage of consultation. Our consultation methods are documented and broken down as follows:

### **Statutory methods:**

- formal press adverts to trigger start of consultation,
- information being promoted on council's website,
- letters and emails notification to statutory consultees,
- letters and emails to non statutory consultees on our database, and
- documents and information available at council offices and libraries and one stop shops across the district.

### **Non-statutory methods:**

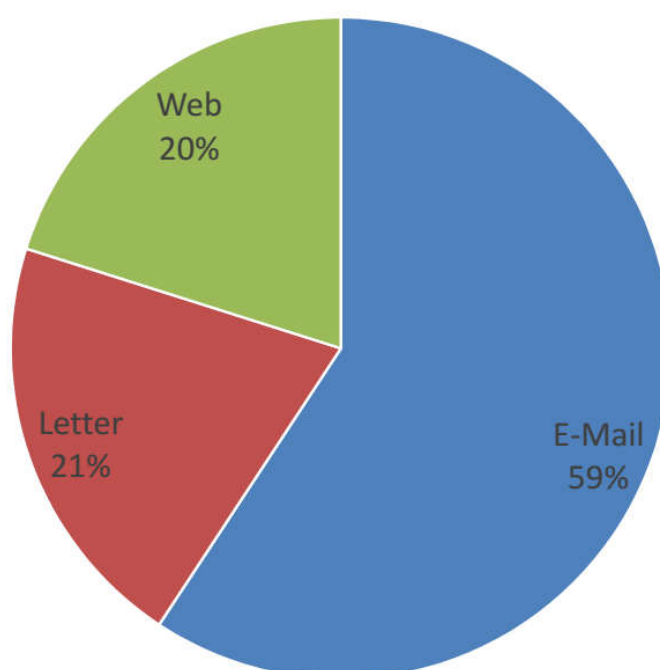
- press release to local media outlets,
- Twitter feeds – promoting the consultation,
- parish newsletter articles – to promote consultation within local parish newsletters,
- internal articles in council's newsletter in focus,
- consultation portal/online survey – using consultation system to improve responding options,
- councillor workshops for member involvement,
- staff workshops for staff involvement,
- two town, parish and neighbourhood planning group briefings – to assist dialogue with local communities,
- exhibitions held in six larger villages where there was no neighbourhood plan in progress:
  - Benson (village hall) Monday (09.03.15) 3pm-8pm
  - Chinnor (village hall) Thursday (05.03.15) 2.30pm – 7pm
  - Cholsey (Pavilion) Friday (20.03.15) 3.00pm - 8pm
  - Crowmarsh (Pavilion) Saturday (14.03.15) 10am-3pm
  - Goring (village hall) Saturday (28.03.15) 10am-2pm
  - Nettlebed (village club) Saturday (21.03.15) 10am-2pm
- and consultation posters/leaflets – with assisted distribution through town and parish councils to promote consultation.

- Consultation banners – distributed at council offices, libraries and one stop shops and leisure centres under district council control, to help promote consultation

## Response to the consultation

In total we received 3215 comments from 750 contributing consultees. This represented a similar level of response to the Issues and Scope consultation. At the exhibitions held in some of the larger villages we a totally of collected post-it notes with a further 822 comments. The comments collected at the exhibitions have been incorporated into our reporting of each corresponding question from the consultation document.

The proportion of responses received from people directly responding using our online consultation system and by hard copy increased slightly, while the percentage of people responding via email reduced. The overall breakdown of responses can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: *Methods used to respond to the consultation.***

In the consultation we asked respondents to provide us with their postcode so that we could document where comments originated and identify areas with little or no response. Postcode data will allow us to target and improve our consultation efforts in underrepresented areas with little to no response.

The comments to the consultation came from all over the district and also further afield. Figure 2 shows where the comments came from within the district. This map also shows that a high number of consultees to the Refined Options consultation were concentrated in a few settlements, such as Goring and Thame. It's also notable how there were very few respondents from the centre of the district in Watlington and the surrounding settlements and no consultees were from Didcot.



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## Responses to consultation questions

### THE VISION

#### **Q1 Does the vision identify the right priorities for South Oxfordshire and, if not, what changes do you suggest?**

We suggested a possible ‘vision’ for the new Local Plan which, while based on that of the existing Core Strategy, had been changed to reflect some of the comments received from our Issues and Scope consultation. Notable changes included putting at the beginning of the vision our intention that the district will remain a beautiful and prosperous place to live, being clearer about our ambitions to improve the quality of design and the environment in new development, and recognising that new housing can both meet local need and demand, and help to sustain or improve the provision of important services in our towns and villages.

We received around 250 individual responses to this question, ranging from single word answers (either “yes” or “no”) to lengthy responses covering several topics.

Overall, the response was mainly positive – indeed, the single most common response was “yes” and variations thereof. Many more people responded along the lines of “yes, but...”, and then added their suggestions for specific points which they felt could either be strengthened, or added to the vision. Key concerns were protecting and preserving the Green Belt around Oxford, emphasising the need for provision of infrastructure (especially transport, water and public services) to support housing growth, and comments that our Smaller Villages should not be excluded from taking some extra housing.

People making negative responses tended generally to provide more detail about what they did not like. Specific points which continually cropped up (approximately in descending order of frequency) were that we were planning for too many additional homes, too few homes (the former usually coming from residents and environmental groups, the latter coming largely from developers and landowners), that our market towns in particular should not be allocated any further growth, and that it would be difficult to reconcile the growth and preservation/conservation parts of the vision.

In addition, there was quite a large number of responses to this question which did not really address the vision itself – these tended to relate to specific sites and were usually negative, being about how that particular site was not suitable for development, although a smaller number of responses pushed the merits of particular sites for development.

Where respondents dealt with how the vision was written or presented – rather than the specific issues it raised – there seemed to be a slight majority view that it had improved from the previous version, but as before there were still comments about it being undeliverable, contradicting itself, and that it was warm words (“motherhood and apple pie”) rather than being anything solid. Again, ahead of our Preferred Options consultation we will look at how the vision can be improved, made more specific and related more to what the Local Plan can deliver.

## APPROPRIATENESS OF THE STRATEGY TO THE VISION

**Q2: Our strategy in a nutshell is to focus change and development in Science Vale, and elsewhere plan for some smaller-scale change to make sure that our towns and villages remain vibrant. Is this the most appropriate strategy to deliver the vision and, if not, what changes do you suggest?**

We asked people to comment on our overall strategy for the district, pointing out that we thought the relatively recent Core Strategy still largely sets the right direction for South Oxfordshire. We summarised our strategic approach as being “to focus change and development in Science Vale, and elsewhere plan for some smaller-scale change to make sure that our towns and villages remain vibrant”, although the consultation document included more explanation of what we meant by this.

We received around 220 responses to this question – asked if they considered that approach the most appropriate, the most common answer (from 15 respondents) was the single word “yes”, while 35 more commented “yes” and then went on to provide further information. 20 respondents either simply said “no”, or “no” followed by further explanation.

The main comments from those who broadly supported the strategy as set out were that housing growth should primarily be being directed to the places likely to see the greatest employment growth, while many also agreed that some growth spread more widely around the district would support the existing service centres.

Those who disagreed with the strategic approach set out gave a number of reasons, including that there were too many homes being proposed, that the character of market towns and villages was already being changed [by Core Strategy and previous housing allocations], and that concentrating too much growth within the Science Vale area ran the risk of producing poorly-designed, poorly connected, poorly served estates.

Other comments covered a huge range of issues – concerns raised included protecting the green belt and AONBs, that the new Local Plan would ignore the wishes of local communities and (as with Question 1), many comments related to specific villages or sites.

## AMOUNT OF NEW HOMES

**Q3 Is 3,600 for our needs and around 3,000 for Oxford City the correct number of additional new homes we should plan for, if not why?**

Question 3 received around 280 responses which contained a wide variety comments, both about the number of homes being planned for and about other issues. The most frequent comment made was that 3,600 additional homes for South Oxfordshire’s needs and around 3,000 for Oxford City is too low, and consequently that we should be planning for more. However, another slightly less frequent response was that this level of additional new homes is too high.

An issue repeatedly discussed within the responses was how the additional level of housing should be distributed. Consultees had a great range of thoughts about

this, with no distinguishable consensus. Responses ranged from supporting or opposing the different housing distribution options (which were originally suggested in the Issues and Scope consultation), to proposing that housing should be located in market towns, larger villages and/or smaller villages, to suggesting that housing for the whole of Oxfordshire should be planned for together or that housing need should be located outside of the district.

In regards to the initial number of 3,000 proposed for Oxford City's unmet housing need, a high amount of comments were made either questioning the accuracy of this number or stating that it should be either higher or lower. A number of comments also suggested that this unmet housing need should not be taken by South Oxfordshire, and that instead that Oxford's housing need should be accommodated within the city itself.

The accuracy of the additional housing need for South Oxfordshire was also frequently discussed with a high level of comments questioning the accuracy of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) or stating that it has flaws. In relation to the latter, a number of consultees were concerned that part of the calculation of the housing need in the SHMA took into account future employment growth.

Consultees were also concerned about the development of Green Belt land, they felt that this land should be protected and is not suitable to accommodate Oxford's unmet housing need. Infrastructure was another concern, consultees felt that the current levels of infrastructure provision is not enough to support more housing and that improvements would be necessary.

## HOUSING DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

### **Q4 What do you think is the most appropriate way of dividing the 3,600 homes between a) Science Vale within South Oxfordshire, b) the market towns and larger villages, and c) the smaller villages?**

This question was addressed by approximately 245 respondents, who gave their view on the appropriate way of dividing the required new housing across the district as requested in the above question. Of these responses a number of key issues were also provided covering a variety of topics.

A large number (64) agreed that small villages should be included. A number of reasons were given for the inclusion of small villages - this included: a proportionate split of housing across the whole district (52) would be a fairer distribution, help to maintain infrastructure locally in villages and to provide housing/affordable housing for future generations.

Of the respondents, 21 said there should be no new housing in small villages, the majority of these people considered that small villages should be protected and that the infrastructure could not cope with a higher capacity, employment was not local to the villages and this would lead to further traffic locally and thus an increase in congestion. Consultees considered that exceptions to development in smaller villages should be based on need in particular affordable housing and two bedroomed housing of which there is a need for those who wish to downsize.

Of the respondents, 65 people supported limited development in larger villages. It was noted that development should be proportional, appropriate and dependant on existing infrastructure and located along good transport corridors. Only six did support new housing in larger villages based on infrastructure needs. Consultees considered that exceptions to development in larger villages should be based on need, in particular affordable housing.

Of the responses received 47 supported new housing in market towns, agreeing that they should take a proportion of the new proposed housing. The reason for this opinion was that the existing infrastructure was available.

Seven comments highlighted concerns with further development in market towns; re-occurring reasons given were that the market towns have all had recent allocations and it's fairer to them to not have allocations this time, and that the traditional market towns and villages should be protected against spread and urbanisation.

A large number of comments (74) supported the idea that the majority of growth should take place at Science Vale. These persons supported this approach due to the location of existing and proposed infrastructure and access to employment by sustainable transport modes. Although this approach was supported; many persons also considered that the rest of the housing should be then distributed amongst market towns, large and small villages each assessed on its individual capacity and needs.

Affordable housing and housing needs were considered a key issue for further development - many consultees mentioned the need to support infrastructure which could be met by CIL contributions which would support the whole district including market towns, larger villages and smaller villages.

Only 13 comments were unsupportive of providing additional housing requirements within Science Vale, key concerns were highlighted with regard to the provision of infrastructure when considering the existing allocations with this area. A number of comments suggested that Science Vale especially Didcot may become saturated with housing allocations and the timing of infrastructure provision was a key issue. Overall deliverability was identified as a key issue within Science Vale & Didcot.

Although Q4 did not specifically ask if a new settlement should be built for the additional housing requirements, three consultees suggested that this should be the appropriate approach.

Other issues raised included:

- Two consultees suggested a Green Belt review should be undertaken.
- Six consultees raised concerns over the protection of the Green Belt and the AONB
- 15 consultees specified that new housing should be located near employment sites

- 43 consultees raised concerns with infrastructure provision (including social infrastructure)
- Eight consultees raised concerns on environment impacts (including air quality)
- 51 consultees proposed a proportionate split across the district
- Nine consultees specifically supported the existing Core Strategy approach

## APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS IN SCIENCE VALE

### **Q5 Which location in Science Vale do you think could be suitable for additional new housing and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

This questions drew less response than many of the others with fewer than 140 comments. The largest number of comments suggested that this was a question best aimed at the people that lived in Science Vale and those that did not were therefore less well qualified to answer.

The greatest level of support was for development at Didcot but a number of people mentioned locations that were already identified for growth in the Core Strategy, such as Ladygrove east and NE Didcot. There was some support for growth at the Culham railway station especially with reference to its location close to employment and the rail connections. There was also support for growth at Berinsfield in order to deliver regeneration and community facilities.

There were suggestions that additional growth should be spread amongst the various villages in Science Vale as well as in Didcot, while others argued that the smaller settlements should be protected from any additional growth. Some respondents suggested that Science Vale ought to include Wallingford, Crowmarsh Gifford and Benson.

There was a strong sense in a number of comments that the location of housing should be well related to access to employment, services and facilities. The strategy for development in Science Vale, however, must make sure that the natural and historic environments are well protected, there were specific references to the AONB and Green Belt.

## APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS WITHIN AND AROUND THE MARKET TOWNS AND LARGER VILLAGES

### **Q6 Are there particular places within or around the market towns and larger villages where some of the additional growth could be located, how much housing would be appropriate and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

Around 200 responses were made to question 6. The most frequently raised response in relation to the location of development was that brownfield sites should be used for housing. Other common themes were that the location of development should be decided by local people, through Neighbourhood Plans and that windfalls should count towards the housing numbers needed. A number of people responded that both Thame and Wallingford should not take any more

growth, and another frequently raised concern was that there should be no growth in the Green Belt and AONB.

With regard to specific sites, a large number of sites were put forward by site promoters. The site that was referred to most often as being suitable for development was GOR9 in Goring. Wheatley and the Wheatley campus were also cited several times as a suitable place for growth.

Several respondents commented on the distribution of growth across the market towns, larger villages and smaller villages. There was a mix of opinions with some respondents stating that the growth should be distributed fairly across the market towns and larger villages, some respondents felt that the market towns and larger villages should not take any more growth, with several respondents saying the these places were already 'vibrant and self-sufficient'. A number of respondents felt that the smaller villages and other settlements should take some of the growth.

In terms of the positives that development could bring, the most common one raised was affordable housing.

#### BENSON SITES

**Q7 Which of the Benson sites – particularly the sites we have shortlisted BEN1, BEN2, part of BEN3, part of BEN5 – should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

The choice of sites in Benson has been compromised by the appeal decision on BEN1 Littleworth Road site.

There was support for development across a number of sites in Benson, also to seek to secure a link road between the A4074 at the garage and the B4009 in order to remove some through traffic from the village. There was concern about the validity of the acoustic assessment undertaken in the village and some support for sites 7 and 8 which were eliminated as being too noisy.

Traffic and infrastructure are concerns locally, and new development should minimise impacts on these. Thames Water also identify concerns with sewerage and water supply which will need to be addressed. Care also needs to be taken to avoid sterilising mineral resources, to avoid harm to the conservation area, archaeological remains and landscape.

Additional sites suggested include the re-use of any redundant land at the air base.

Figure 9 in appendix 1 shows where respondents to Q7 came from. It can be noticed from this that most of the consultees either live or are based in Benson.

#### CHINNOR SITES

**Q8 Which of the Chinnor sites – particularly the sites we have shortlisted CHI7, CHI8 or CHI20 – should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

There was limited support (four to six comments) for the sites suggested in the consultation CHI7, CHI8 and CHI20 plus the garden centre site CHI9. Some consultees suggested reconsidering sites CHI1, CHI2, CHI19, CHI21 and garden areas along Ickneild Way.

There was limited support for more housing and against more housing in Chinnor was expressed. A small number of consultees noted their support for more housing across the district and for meeting 965 homes per annum.

Concern was expressed about the impacts on the landscape setting of the AONB, flood risk (site 7), historic assets, roads and traffic including neighbouring villages, water supply and sewerage.

Many consultees who gave their views in relation to the Chinnor sites live or are based near to the settlement, this can be seen in figure 10 in appendix 1.

## CHOLSEY SITES

### **Q9 Which of the Cholsey sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted sites CHOL1, CHOL2 and CHOL3 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

As with the other larger villages, the main responses were no opinion on the site choices or no view because that the residents of Cholsey should decide. Of those who expressed a view, CHOL2 was the most popular, followed by CHOL1, CHOL2 and 3 developed together and then CHOL3.

There was very little objection to the shortlisted sites from the public or statutory consultees. English Heritage advised that CHOL2 lies opposite the grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden of the former Fairmile Hospital so development on the south-eastern edge of this site should respect its setting. English Nature commented that all three shortlisted sites are in the setting of the AONB, would represent a significant increase in the size of the village, and would involve the loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, for which further detailed studies would be required. They recommended a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact to assess capacity and consideration of the reduced area for CHOL2 identified in the landscape study. Oxfordshire County Council recommended an archaeological pre-determination assessment and commented that the primary school had recently expanded and has scope to expand further.

Promoters of non-shortlisted sites (CHOL6, 7 and 8) made some fairly brief representations about why their sites should be re-considered. General concerns were that large scale development could change the rural character of Cholsey, put pressure on the village centre parking and add to traffic problems at the Reading Road/Papist Way junction. The concept of integrating the existing village with the Cholsey Meadows site by reaching out development and green infrastructure across CHOL3 and CHOL2 received support from four respondents, although it was questioned by a smaller number. Some site specific concerns raised by the public, some of which could potentially be addressed through design and masterplanning work. For CHOL1 key points raised were the safety of the access, the loss of farm/ rural feel, residential amenity because of the short

gardens in neighbouring Rothwells Close. For CHOL2 several people said the site was too big, and suggested just developing part of the site (for example the south east corner), one pointed out loss of habitat for hares and birds. For CHOL3 concerns were raised about the suitability and width of the access at Celsea Place, the short gardens in Lapwing Lane.

Suggestions for positives the development could bring were the integration of the new and old parts of Cholsey and new cycle and footpath links. There were ideas for adding new shops and community facilities to the CHOL2/3 site, possibly extra care housing, and a new site for the small free school.

Many consultees who gave their views in relation to the potential development sites in Cholsey sites either live or are based near to the settlement, and a few respondents came from further afield. This can be seen in figure 11 in appendix 1.

## CROWMARSH SITES

### **Q10 Which of the Crowmarsh Gifford sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted sites CRO6 and CRO7 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

The most common response was either no view on the sites or that the residents of Crowmarsh Gifford should decide. Of those individuals who expressed a preference, the most popular site for development was the shortlisted site CRO6 (eight supports in the written responses plus eight at the exhibition), followed by CRO7 (seven supports and three at the exhibition), then both sites developed together (three plus one at the exhibition). Of the non –shortlisted sites, there was support for building housing on the fire-damaged Council Offices site (six supports and four at the exhibition). Of note was the very low level of objection to the shortlisted sites from individuals (just 1 objector to CRO6 and three objectors to CRO7). None of the non-shortlisted sites received any significant support. For CRO2 there were three supports in the written responses, plus one support and five objections at the exhibition.

The concept of developing CRO6 as a small site in the centre of the village attracted some positive comments. The main issues raised by individuals regarding the shortlisted sites were concern about traffic safety on the A4074, children's safety outside the primary school on the Old Reading Road, the capacity of the sewerage network and the effect on future residents of aircraft noise from RAF Benson. A couple of people raised questions about the loss of the campsite and asked where the caravans would go. There was some concern that the CRO7 site was too big, but on the other hand a suggestion that the development could help ameliorate the landscape impact of the Lister Wilder building. Positives suggestions included the need for a pedestrian crossing at the Street, providing parking for the school, and accessing to the east (to the A4074) rather than adding to road safety concerns along Old Reading Road outside the school.

Landscape issues were raised by Natural England, noting that both shortlisted sites are in the Chilterns AONB and that the Council would have to determine whether it constituted 'major development' and if so whether there were



exceptional circumstances and a need for the allocation. They noted that CRO6 had a higher landscape capacity than CRO7 so CRO6 should be developed in preference to CRO7, and discussed a reduced area for development on CRO7. The Chilterns Conservation Board objected to both CRO6 and CRO7, stating that non-AONB sites should be developed in preference. English Heritage noted that the shortlisted sites had Grade II listed buildings nearby and development should respect their settings.

Oxfordshire County Council identified Crowmarsh Gifford as a particularly suitable village for expansion because of the high frequency bus service and proximity to Wallingford. They noted that the primary school is on a constrained site adjoining CRO6 and 7 and commented that it may be that land could be made available to facilitate the school's necessary expansion. Thames Water commented that some upgrades might be required to the water supply and would be likely to be needed for waste water infrastructure.

The most lengthy objection came from the promoters of CRO2, explaining that Crowmarsh Gifford should have a higher housing allocation, and that their site was preferable for reasons including that it is not in the AONB. They commented that the proportional growth approach and the shortlisting process were flawed, that the popularity of sites with the local community is not a relevant consideration in making housing allocation decisions, which must be predicated upon national policy and sustainability criteria. They called for CRO2 to be allocated, if necessary just the southern portion of the site. Promoters of CRO9 suggested that their site should be developed as well as the shortlisted sites, especially the northern part of the site with a more discrete character.

Consultees who gave their views about how Crowmarsh Gifford should develop in the future mostly either live or are based near to the settlement, and a few respondents came from further afield. This can be seen in figure 12 in appendix 1.

## GORING SITES

**Q11 Which of the Goring sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted GOR1, GOR2, GOR4 and GOR11 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

Question 11 received around 200 responses, with all of the shortlisted sites receiving responses in favour for development and against development, to a greater or lesser degree.

The most frequently raised response was an objection to allocating GOR11 for development, with the most common reason being flooding. Other reasons also frequently cited were: distance from the school; impact on roads and traffic; impact on the character of the area, including impact on walkers; and the sewerage system. A number of respondents felt that GOR11 was a good site for housing, although some people thought that it would only be suitable for a small number of homes.

Sites GOR1 and GOR2 both received considerable support, with several of the respondents in support of GOR1 saying that pavement improvements along Wallingford Road would be needed and some traffic calming measures.

A number of people thought that GOR9 should be reconsidered as an option, with the potential to use some of the site for a new or replacement school.

Petitions were submitted against development on sites GOR2 and GOR11, signed by 61 people and 141 people respectively.

Other more general comments made were that school capacity, medical services and traffic/parking were areas of concern. A number of respondents thought that the housing in Goring should be spread across a number of sites.

Goring Primary School have stated that they are operating at full capacity, and that without significant financial investment the current site presents no scope for expansion.

The Chilterns Conservation Board object to the possible allocations at Goring, particularly GOR1 and GOR11, as they state that development of these sites would be most unlikely to lead to the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns AONB.

The Environment Agency have commented that GOR11 would have to pass a Sequential Test. If it passed the Sequential Test they would expect the policy wording to commit to there being no built development in Flood Zones 2/3.

Natural England have commented that they agree with the conclusions in the Landscape Capacity Assessment that GOR1 and GOR11b (the southern section of GOR11) should not be developed. With regard to the other shortlisted sites they advise that a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be required.

Thames Water have stated that there are no significant concerns with the sewerage network or treatment works and that the current water supply infrastructure around Goring is likely to be able to support additional development, although there is a possibility that further water supply network infrastructure may be required in the future.

Figure 13 in appendix 1 shows that a large majority of the consultees who gave their views in relation to the development sites suggested for Goring live or are based near to the settlement.

## NETTLEBED SITES

**Q12 Which of the Nettlebed sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted NET1 and NET3 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?**

The strongest message to come out of the responses made to question 12 was that respondents did not wish site NET1 to be allocated. The reasons cited for this

were that it was an important site for wildlife, including protected species, it is distant from the village centre, and access would be across common land. The site that received the most support was NET3, with many respondents saying that it was close to village amenities, including the school. A number of respondents thought that both sites were suitable.

Several respondents thought that Joyce Grove should be used for Nettlebed's housing allocation, and felt that the grounds could be used for some housing. Respondents wanted Joyce Grove to remain accessible with public rights of way. The capacity of the school and traffic were raised as issues, as well as Nettlebed's position within the AONB and a small number of respondents felt that Nettlebed was not a sustainable/appropriate place for more housing.

A small number of respondents wished to see more affordable housing in the village.

The Chilterns Conservation Board object to the possible allocations at Nettlebed as development here would be unlikely to lead to the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns AONB. They stated that fundamentally Nettlebed is an unsustainable location for growth and thought that a reduced level of housing growth should be considered.

Natural England advises the Council to liaise with the Chilterns AONB Board, and to make reference to their Management Plan. Natural England highlight that NET1 is located within close proximity to the Priest Hill SSSI and an assessment of the potential impacts would be required.

Oxfordshire County Council said that it is unlikely that Nettlebed can be served with commercially viable public transport and that it should not be a location for any significant development.

Thames Water has said that with regard to waste water, the network has capacity constraints.

As can be seen in figure 14 in appendix 1, consultees who responded to question 12 live or are based in a range of places in the district. However a number of respondents are based close to Nettlebed. This is a similar pattern to that seen within questions 7 to 11, with a high number of respondents being based in or near to the specific sites they commented on.

## POLICIES FOR SMALLER VILLAGES

**Q13 Do you think that policies for smaller villages should be relaxed to enable a small increase in the number of homes built, and are there other things we could do to help meet the local housing need in these villages?**

The majority of respondents to question 13 agreed that policies for smaller villages should be relaxed to enable a small increase in the number of homes built. In particular, they welcomed smaller and more affordable properties for first time buyers and older people looking to downsize.

Many of the respondents felt that the most appropriate mechanism for allowing housing in smaller villages was by preparing a neighbourhood plan and that communities in smaller villages should not be prohibited from allocating development through the neighbourhood plan process. In the absence of a neighbourhood plan the respondents felt that there needed to be additional community consultation and any development should be based on the views of and agreed by the community.

Many of the respondents considered that new housing in smaller villages would help to support local services and facilities, which would keep the villages sustainable and vibrant.

Key concerns of the respondents was the impact that new development would have on the character of smaller villages and the necessity of having adequate infrastructure in place.

Many of the respondents felt that this would result in a more sustainable distribution of development that would have a more balanced impact on infrastructure.

There was strong support to consider brownfield sites and empty properties in smaller villages before green field sites.

## OXFORD'S UNMET HOUSING NEED

### **Q14 Where do you think is the most appropriate place to place for Oxford's unmet need and why?**

There was quite a high level of interest in this question and it received over 420 responses. The Green Belt was a particular topic that was referenced by over half the respondents, some in support of changing the boundaries and others objecting, but what was clear was that it is a subject that needs careful consideration and robust reasons for change.

A number of respondents questioned the SHMA findings and indeed the validity of the claims that there is an unmet housing need arising from Oxford.

There appear to have been organised local objections to each of sites mentioned in the consultation document with very similar, or identical, comments being sent to us by a number of individuals. Reoccurring themes in response to the question, regardless of location were: questioning whether existing infrastructure, especially roads, could cope; concern for the impact on the natural and historic environment and that all development, particularly that for Oxford's need, should be allocated near to employment.

Some support was also received for each of the suggested solutions to the question and other locations were also suggested. There was quite a strong feeling that Oxford's housing need should be met in Oxford but others suggested it be spread amongst the towns and larger villages in South Oxfordshire. Didcot

and Science Vale was mentioned as a potential location, as was Wheatley and Wallingford. Some other places outside of the district, such as Bicester, were also mentioned.

## EMPLOYMENT LAND

**Q15 Our suggested locations for additional employment land are at Monument Business Park, Culham Science Centre, Didcot station area and the market town centres. Do you have other suggestions?**

There was a general view that housing and employment provision should be provided in close proximity and in sustainable locations following the strategy in the Strategic Economic Plan. There was also a strong theme that employment should be provided in locations with good public transport connections, good road connections and with good parking.

There was general support for the locations suggested in the Refined Options consultation, which were Monument Business Park, Culham Science Centre, Didcot Station area and the market towns. Monument Park proved most controversial with some supporting it as a good location whilst others felt it is too isolated. There was also some support for all employment to be at Science Vale. We should support locations where businesses want to locate and recognise the importance of tourism to the district and not spoil our historical assets.

Additional suggestions were:

- Howbery Park
- Berinsfield – redevelopment of existing sites and use of the car boot field
- Watlington and Wheatley industrial area expansion
- Didcot power station
- Oxford, Grenoble Road
- MOD land at Benson and Chalgrove
- Junction 7 on the M40

There was some support for smaller business premises across the district, home working and conversion of agricultural premises to provide a range of opportunities and support for the network of settlements.

## EXPANDING AND REDEVELOPING TOWN CENTRES

**Q16 Our suggested approach is to focus new shopping at Didcot, while continuing to allow for limited growth in the other town centres. Can you suggest site opportunities for expanding or redeveloping parts of the town centres?**

Around 90 responses were received to this question. In response to the approach of focussing new shopping at Didcot, several respondents commented that they were in favour of this approach. A number of respondents commented that getting into Didcot and parking was difficult and this would need resolving.

Common points raised were that on-line shopping is a growing trend and this will affect future shopping needs, and several people said that shops should be located in town centres rather than in out of town shopping centres. In relation to this, a number of respondents commented that smaller shops were needed.

Several respondents thought that Wallingford needs a better retail offer, as well as more parking.

In terms of suggested sites, the most common one was the old Waitrose site in Wallingford.

## PROVIDING FOR TRAVELLING COMMUNITIES

### **Q17 Do you think that these sites are suitable for traveller caravan pitches and can you suggest any further or more suitable sites?**

The majority of respondents either had no comment or felt that they were unable to comment on whether the suggested sites were suitable for traveller use. Many respondents felt that, if possible, no new sites should be allocated rather they preferred that existing sites were regularised and/or extended.

Some respondents considered the Menmarsh scrapyards site to be unsuitable due to a lack of services, potential contamination, and the impact on neighbouring properties and businesses. There was a difference in opinion as to whether the site at Philips Tyres was appropriate with some respondents suggesting it to be the most suitable and sustainable site and others considering it to be unsuitable. Some respondents identified the existing sites to be focused in the north of the district and felt that new sites should be distributed more evenly around the district.

Other suggested sites suggested by the respondents included – Adjacent to Monument Business Park, Chalgrove; Didcot Power Station; Chalgrove airfield; old council depots; Abandoned airfields.

## PROVIDING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

### **Q18 What sort of housing should we plan for people as they get older and where should it be?**

Question 18 has a relatively small response in comparison to the number of comments made on other questions contained within the Local Plan 2031 'Refined Options' Consultation.

In regard to development for the elderly, the majority of respondents believed a prerequisite was for developments to be contained within a close proximity to town centre/amenities. This was to ensure that the elderly would have the capacity to easily access local services and infrastructure, because mobility may become a problem within the older generation.

This also has a direct correlation with a number of respondents approving development for smaller units for the elderly to downsize. The main belief is not only will mobility affect the elderly's capacity to gain access to local amenities, but also for safe mobility and freedom to move around the house. It also has to be said that a number of respondents have commented that larger scale houses are not a necessity because most, if not all of the family (namely children) would have now moved out, therefore many rooms will become redundant. Downsizing also offers the opportunity for younger generations starting a family the opportunity to

up-size. However, it has been recognised that incentives, namely financial, are needed to encourage the elderly to downsize.

It has also been commented that mixture of design ranging from small to large scale homes are also needed due to people's varying age, mobility and requirements. In contrast number of respondents believe that the elderly should remain in the same location, close to family, friends and the area they know. Yet, this would almost be impossible to develop new homes for the elderly in every location in the hope that they have the option to remain within the same location.

## OTHER PLANNING POLICIES

### **Q19 Are there any of our policies that need changing, if so why, and are there any new emerging topics we should be introducing policies on?**

Question 19 is very varied, with a number of individual and personal concerns in regards to the Local Plan 2031 'Refined Options', as demonstrated in Table 1 below. However, three main issues have been highlighted by the consultation.

The main concern is in regard to the number houses required by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and put forward in the Local Plan. A number of residents believe the allocated number is too high and should be reviewed before the Plan is put into implementation.

Secondly people believe that an industry recognised standard for energy efficiency should be used for residential and commercial development. BREEAM standards are most notably promoted in the use for developing a district wide policy.

Thirdly, there is a small consensus in relation to the protection of the Green Belt and the AONB. A number of residents are concerned that current and proposed policy is not robust enough to protect Green Belt and the AONB from development. They believe a stronger robust Policy is required to stop development within the Green Belt and help protect the AONB.

| <b>Table 1: Frequency of responses to question 19 in the Local Plan 2031 Refined Options consultation.</b> |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Comment</b>   | <b>Count</b> |
| Diverse range of shops in town centres   | I            |
| Support new businesses   | I            |
| Planning Website difficult to navigate   | I            |
| Flooding needs to be addressed   | III          |
| Clear understanding of the Green Belt  | I            |
| Stronger policies against development  | I            |
| More robust on implementing present policies   | II           |
| Review is needed against age and employment distribution   | I            |
| Policy change on the amount of required housing. SHMA recommendations                                      | IIII IIIII I |
| Policy to underline what plans and/or applications take precedent  | I            |
| Investment on public transport   | III          |
| Policies to set targets for the reduction of energy use. Also use a standard recognised energy standards.  | IIII III     |
| Linking housing and transport  | I            |

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Integrated Planning  | I      |
| Listen to public views more  | III    |
| Provide the context for other emerging plans   | I      |
| Support for renewable and local food produce.  | I      |
| Prioritise Brownfield Development  | I      |
| Protection of the Green Belt and AONB  | IIII I |
| Development could damage community cohesion and sense of place                                   | I      |
| Windfall housing should reduce the amount of housing approved.                                   | II     |
| CS12 'infill' needs changing   | II     |
| Encouragement for Neighbourhood Plans and CBO's  | IIII   |
| Encouragement for all types of self builds not just the register                                 | I      |
| Protect the districts eco-systems  | I      |
| Developments on the western side of the county should not affect other parts of the county.      | I      |
| Develop a small number of houses each time in communities  | I      |
| CSEN3 retained as a strategic policy. (Historic England)   | I      |
| Protection of watercourses.  | I      |
| Earth Trust land to be included in the open space study  | I      |
| Affordable housing on sites as low as two houses.  | I      |
| Support easy and cheap access to rechargeable vehicles.  | I      |
| Decrease the use of fossil fuel.   | I      |
| Seek financial contribution instead of affordable housing.                                       | I      |
| Approach to infilling needs relaxing.  | I      |
| Policies for mobile phone coverage   | I      |
| Policies to support community infrastructure   | IIII   |
| Leisure attractions for Crowmarsh  | I      |
| Settlement Hierarchy needs amending  | I      |
| CSS1 and CSR1 needs amending to allow more than limited amounts of housing in smaller locations. | I      |
| Applications should be decided on a case by case basis not on the maximum area of sites.         | I      |
| Smaller villages should be expanded  | I      |
| Correlation with employment.   | II     |
| Support development within Wheatley  | I      |
| Support development within Cholsey   | I      |
| Policies in regard to Oxford Brooke's Whealely Campus  | I      |
| Policy for 55+ age   | I      |
| Support development within Chinnor   | I      |
| More protection for agricultural land  | I      |
| Slippage of the smart date should be firmed up.  | I      |
| Stop development at Grenoble Road  | I      |
| Housing on Didcot A site will have little impact   | I      |
| Do not allow smaller villages to emerge.   | I      |
| Support retail development   | I      |
| Development should be directed in regards to their facilities, services and infrastructure       | I      |
| The plan should meet its assessed need for housing.  | I      |
| Support the proposal for Oxford's unmet need.  | I      |
| Rural settlements should be recognised as sustainable locations                                  | I      |
| Relax Policies to allow for development in smaller villages                                      | I      |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Improve and retain leisure and recreational facilities in towns         | III |
| Support of Co-housing   | I   |
| Allocated time to develop housing, so it is not land banked             | I   |
| Industrial and housing zoning needs to be re-installed                  | I   |
| Too much emphasis on housing in villages                                | III |
| Noise at Benson is unbearable   | I   |
| Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan needs to reflect the updated evidence base. | I   |
| Policies for more affordable homes for key workers                      | I   |

## ANY OTHER COMMENTS

### **Q20 Do you have any other comments you would like to make?**

This question was addressed by approximately 95 respondents, due to the nature of this question a number of key issues covering a variety of topics were received. The section below outlines the key issues raised and attempts to summarise them.

#### **Oxford City Council unmet need**

Of the respondents, two people objected to South Oxfordshire assisting with meeting the 'Unmet Need' for Oxford City Council

#### **Protection of the Green Belt**

Of the respondents, 14 people objected to any review of the Green Belt, the key comments included:

- The Green Belt around Oxford is key to preventing merger of surrounding villages into the City

#### **Supportive of Green Belt review**

Of the respondents, two people proposed a Green Belt review, comments included:

- Green Belt review should include the Wheatley Campus and the option of removing part or all of it from the Green Belt;
- The time has come for a rational review of the Oxford Green Belt.

#### **Consultation**

Of the respondents, nine people were concerned with the consultation process, key issues raised included:

- Community decision making should be key to decisions about new housing allocations;
- Out of a population of approximately 70,000 individuals (2011 census) who could respond to your consultations you had around 800 individuals who did respond – this number is not representative of the population and suggests that the consultation process is inadequate;
- The online survey is difficult to use;
- The form is totally inadequate to provide meaningful comments;
- Better publication of the consultation events;
- Consultation too short.

#### **Protect AONB**

Of the respondents, six people objected to any harm to the AONB, comments included:

- The rural nature of the Chilterns AONB should be more strongly protected than it is at present;
- Suppression of light pollution should be a priority;
- Objection to development that impacts the AONB.

### **Affordable housing & smaller dwellings**

Of the respondents, five people raised concerns about lack of affordable housing and the need for smaller dwellings, comments included:

- Provision of low-occupancy units for example 1-2 bed dwellings;
- Affordable housing should be built where the need is required;
- Social housing should include 1 bedroomed dwellings;
- A variety of housing needs is required.

### **Nature conservation**

Of the respondents, five people specified issues relating to nature conservation, the following are key extracts from these comments:

- Designation of County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites should involve consultation with the land owners;
- Concerns raised that the designations for some sites give a false impression of the value of and access to the land;
- Protect the natural environment, enhance the Green belt by improving its potential as a wildlife habitat for example improving hedgerows;
- Developments should be designed to integrate ecology;
- We recommend that an initial assessment of the ecological value of all proposed development sites is undertaken to inform the allocation of the sites in the Local Plan, to determine whether allocation of the site is appropriate in terms of biodiversity impacts.

### **Flooding, water / sewage capacity**

Of the respondents, four people raised concerns relating to the water environment these comments included:

- Make sure flood plain areas are properly identified and avoided;
- Concern about increase in hard surfaces will lead to further flooding of the upper Thames Valley;
- No housing should be built in areas liable to flooding;
- Services infrastructure, particularly foul and storm drainage should be a consideration.

### **Local character, historic environment**

Of the respondents, nine people raised concerns about local character and the historic environment. These included:

- Protect local character, the historic environment and conservation areas;
- Concern over the loss of characters of our towns and villages; if we lose any of these we risk losing the whole beauty of the region and the reason why people want to live here;
- Policy needs to protect the Green Belt and AONBs and the characters of our towns and villages;

- Local character should be protected for tourism;
- Continue consultation with Historic England;
- Retain the history and character of our very precious villages.

### **Transport infrastructure, traffic, air pollution, cycle routes**

The topic that received the most comments (17) within the responses to this question was in relation to transport infrastructure, traffic, air pollution, and cycle routes, the comments are summarised below:

- Our village has very few pavements, narrow roads, blind bends and dangerously limited sight lines on junctions;
- Surrounding transport infrastructure should be provide;
- Integration with OCC LTP4;
- Provide better cycle and pedestrian roads, off-road cycle links between settlements and major employment locations;
- Improve public/sustainable transport provision;
- Support for a new Thames crossing,
- Reopen the Wallingford to Cholsey railway;
- Park and ride car park needed at J6 of M40;
- Developments of any size should include the requirement for a widespread Traffic Assessment and a Public Transport Assessment, including payment to bus operators to get services up and running before they are necessarily commercial viable;
- Corridors for guided bus or light rail/train should be provided'
- Concerns raised about air pollution;
- Concerns raised about congestion;
- Concerns raised about noise and vibration damage caused by traffic including HGVs using unapproved routes for through journeys;
- Support for a new bypass for Clifton Hampden and Long Wittenham;
- Concern that Thames travel will not cope with additional development, extra funding with be required;
- Concern about traffic passing through villages;
- Rail and trunk road links go along the edges of the District;
- Cars are likely to remain the principle means of transport for the vast majority of residents, unrealistic to rely on bus transport;
- Concerns about A34 Growth pressure;
- HGV Park and Ride requirement.

### **Over capacity at Didcot**

Of the respondents, two people raised concerns of development leading to over capacity at Didcot.

### **Development too high/housing figures/SHMA/existing allocations**

Of the respondents, eight people raised the following points:

- Objections to SHMA figures;
- Growth is too high and not considered necessary;
- Consideration should be given to current housing allocations, before deciding on new site allocations.

### **New housing near employment**

Of the respondents, four people raised the following points:

- One person considered that people could commute if the railway service was improved at Didcot, they suggested that this would prevent the need for new housing;
- 3 people considered that new development should be located near employment sites.

### **Community decision making and neighbourhood development plans**

Of the respondents, eight people raised the following points:

- One person raised concern over neighbourhood development plans being unrealistic in small communities as can lead to disagreements between neighbours;
- Concerns that communities should be making their own decisions;
- Concerns that this consultation process will not allow communities to make their own decisions;
- Concerns that recent neighbourhood development plans will not be adhered to with regard to the allocations of new housing;
- Neighbourhood development plans should be the only mechanism for allocating housing.

### **Loss of agricultural Land**

Of the respondents, three people raised the following points:

- Agricultural land should be protected for access to local food and to increase food security.

### **Resource use/climate change**

Of the respondents, four people raised the following points:

- Concern as to how the 20 per cent carbon reduction target by 2020 will be reached;
- Energy efficiency of new-builds not addressed;
- Climate change not addressed;
- Services infrastructure, particularly electricity needs to be addressed.

### **Urban Design and good quality housing social cohesion**

Of the respondents, five people raised the following points:

- Promote good urban design;
- Promote social cohesion'
- Promote good quality housing;
- Good urban design should include no large settlements, only small settlements integrated into towns and villages.

### **Social infrastructure**

Of the respondents, four people raised the following points:

- Concerns raised about lack of social infrastructure, i.e. schools;
- Community impacts should be a consideration for housing allocation.

### **Ageing population**

Of the respondents, two people raised the following points:

- One person suggested that the Plan should be planning for an ageing population;
- One Person considered the Plan to be discriminating against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. “What other group do you force to live together in a ‘care home”.

#### **No new settlement**

Of the respondents, two people used question 20 to object to any proposal for a new settlement.

#### **Empty Homes**

Of the respondents, one person noted that there is nothing in the Plan about bringing empty houses back into use.

#### **Windfall sites**

Of the respondents, one person suggested that Windfall housing should be taken into consideration when determining allocations

#### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

All responses that were received for the SA will be documented and addressed within the Sustainability Appraisal Report that will accompany the next stage the Local Plan.

## Feedback from consultation events

As well as publishing the consultation material online we held a number of events both in larger villages as exhibitions and with councillors.

The public exhibitions were held in the six larger villages where there was no Neighbourhood Plan in progress. The locations, dates and times of these exhibitions were as follows:

- Benson (village hall) Monday (09.03.15) 3pm-8pm
- Chinnor (village hall) Thursday (05.03.15) 2.30pm – 7pm
- Cholsey (Pavilion) Friday (20.03.15) 3.00pm - 8pm
- Crowmarsh (Pavilion) Saturday (14.03.15) 10am-3pm
- Goring (village hall) Saturday (28.03.15) 10am-2pm
- Nettlebed (village club) Saturday (21.03.15) 10am-2pm

The exhibitions were staffed by members of the policy team with support from parish councillors. Information on the key Local Plan topics was presented on display boards alongside some village-specific information boards explaining which sites had been shortlisted and the positives and negatives of each site. Large maps of the district and of the villages were set out on tables with post-it notes and pens for people to write comments and stick to the maps. Leaflets and copies of the questionnaire were available for people to take away and copies of relevant documents were available for reference.

### CONSULTATION EXHIBITION IN BENSON

Out of the six public exhibitions held for the Refined Options consultation, the event in Benson received the second highest amount of responses: the total number of comments received was 216. Of those comments almost 40 per cent were general comments while the rest were in regards to specific sites.

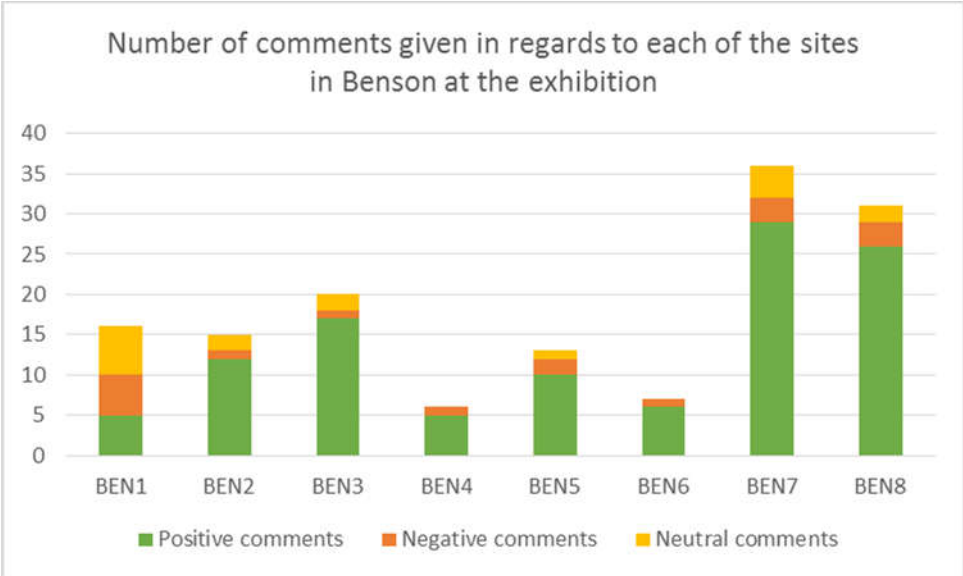
There was a wide range in the issues discussed in the general comments and little consensus as most comments only occurred once. Most frequently consultees suggested that the houses should be spread around Benson rather than concentrated on any particular site and that a bypass should be built.

As can be seen in figure 3, BEN7 and BEN8 were the most commented on sites, receiving 36 and 31 comments respectively. Most of these comments were positive and very similar; they included:

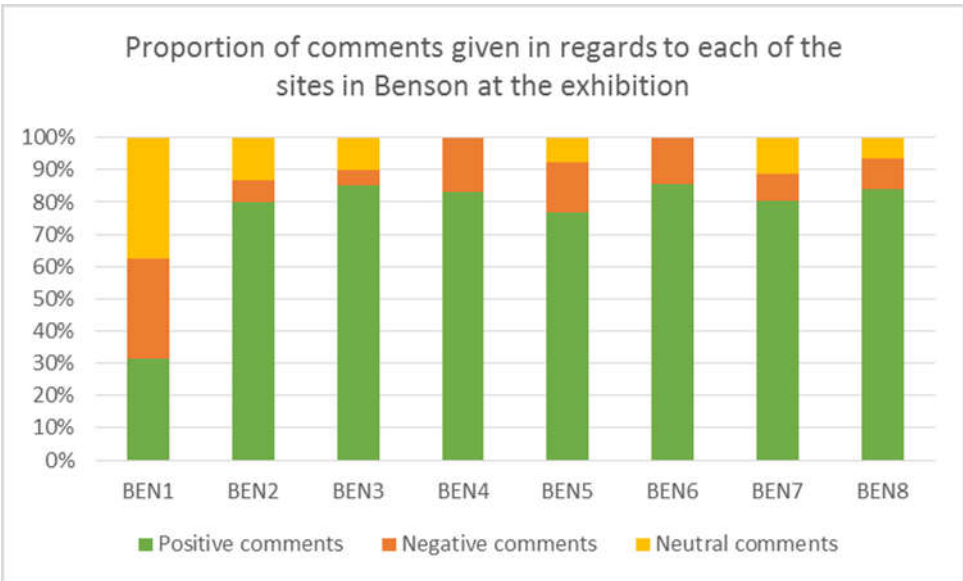
- development should be split between BEN2, BEN3, BEN7, and BEN8,
- development should be split between BEN5, BEN6, BEN7, and BEN8,
- noise from RAF Benson has been over stated,
- there's good access by road, foot and bicycle,
- CIL money should be used to improve the St Helen/A4074 junction,
- the sites would cause least disturbance to Benson,
- the sites should be considered together, and
- the sites sit within the village boundaries.

The sites that received the highest proportion of positive comments were BEN3 and BEN6, this can be seen in figure 4. However both received relatively low

amounts of comments in comparison to BEN7 and BEN8. BEN4 and BEN5 received the least amount of comments and BEN1 had the highest proportion of negative comments. However, it is noticeable that all of the sites received quite high proportions of positive to negative comments. This perhaps indicates that the residents of Benson are not opposed to development.



**Figure 3: Graph showing the number of comments given in regards to each of the sites in Benson at the public exhibition.**



**Figure 4: Graph showing the proportion of comments given in regards to each of the sites in Benson at the public exhibition.**

### CONSULTATION EXHIBITION IN CHINNOR

Ninety nine comments were submitted during the consultation event in Chinnor. Of those comments only about six per cent were general comments, the majority were in regards to specific sites.

All of the general comments made only occurred once each. They covered a range of topics however most were in regards to infrastructure, for example: facilities for teenagers, under resourcing of infrastructure in the past, road capacity, car parking provision, and the need for a bypass.

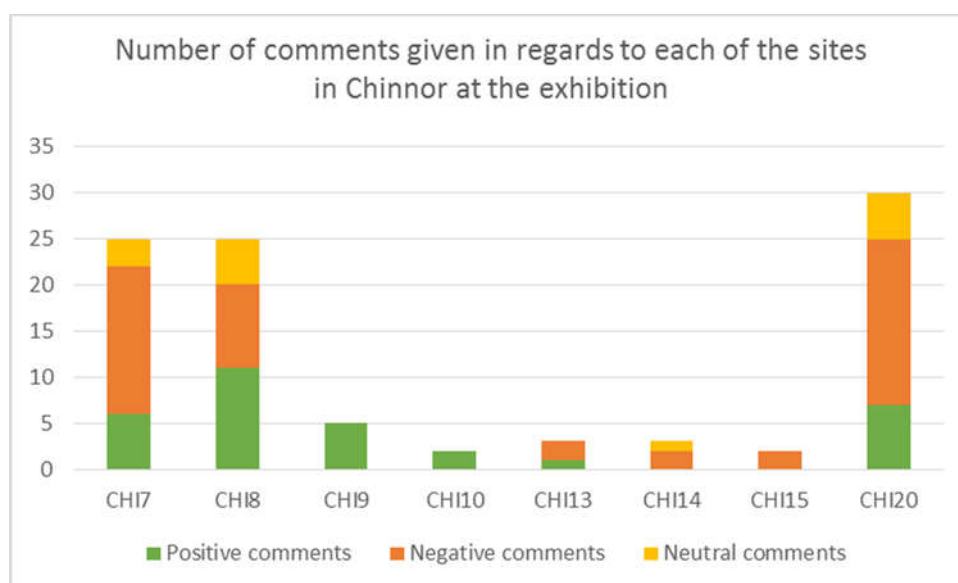
As can be seen in figure 5, the most commented on sites were CHI20, CHI7 and CHI8. However each of these sites (and the majority of the Chinnor sites) had low proportions of positive comments to negative comments, the sites which received the greatest proportions of positive comments, namely CHI9 and CHI10, received comparatively low amounts of comments. This perhaps indicates that residents of Benson are quite opposed to any development.

The negative comments consultees gave in regards to CHI20, CHI7 and CHI8 included:

- poor road access,
- will have a negative impact on roads,
- should be kept as a meadow or used as allotments,
- there are flooding issues,
- its next to a train line,
- sewage and drainage issues, and
- too far from the shops and school.

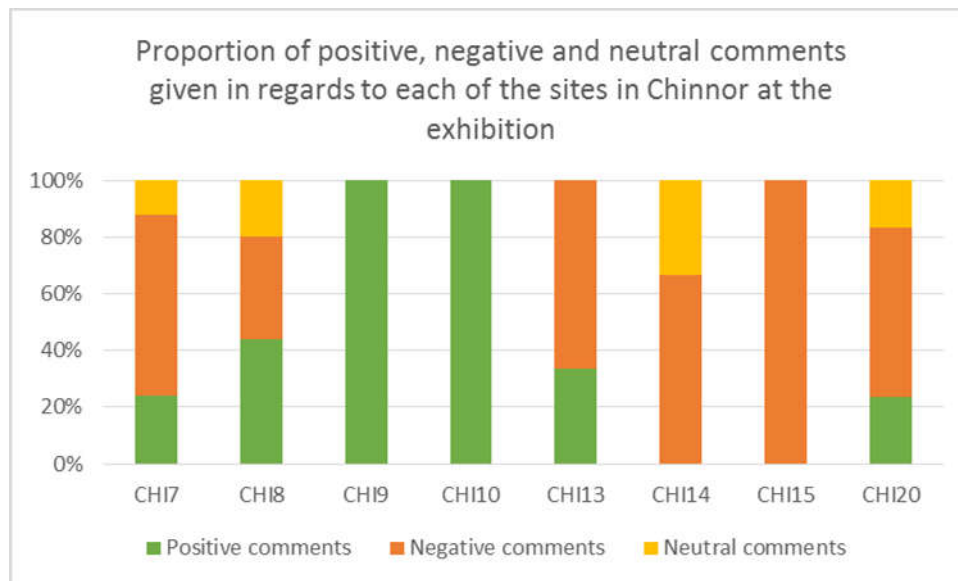
CHI8 received the greatest number of positive comments at the event. These comments included:

- it is well positioned in village,
- could bring road improvements,
- would not impact on existing residents,
- would have views of open fields, and
- vehicular traffic may not need to go through the village centre.



**Figure 5: Graph showing the number of comments given in regards to each of the sites in Chinnor at the public exhibition.**





**Figure 6: Graph showing the proportion of comments given in regards to each of the sites in Chinnor at the public exhibition.**

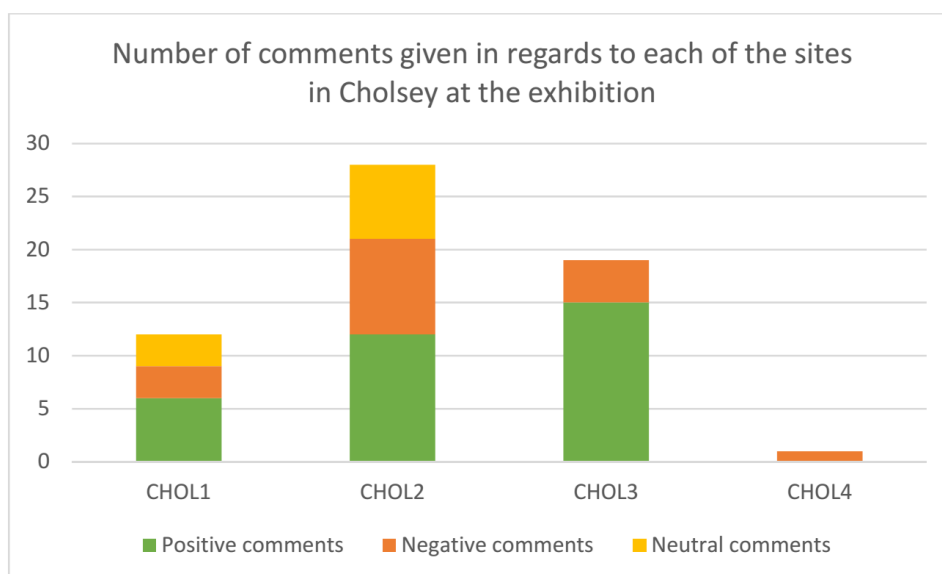
## CONSULTATION EXHIBITION IN CHOLSEY

The Cholsey public exhibition generated 76 comments in total. About a third of these were general comments and the rest were in regards to the sites in Cholsey.

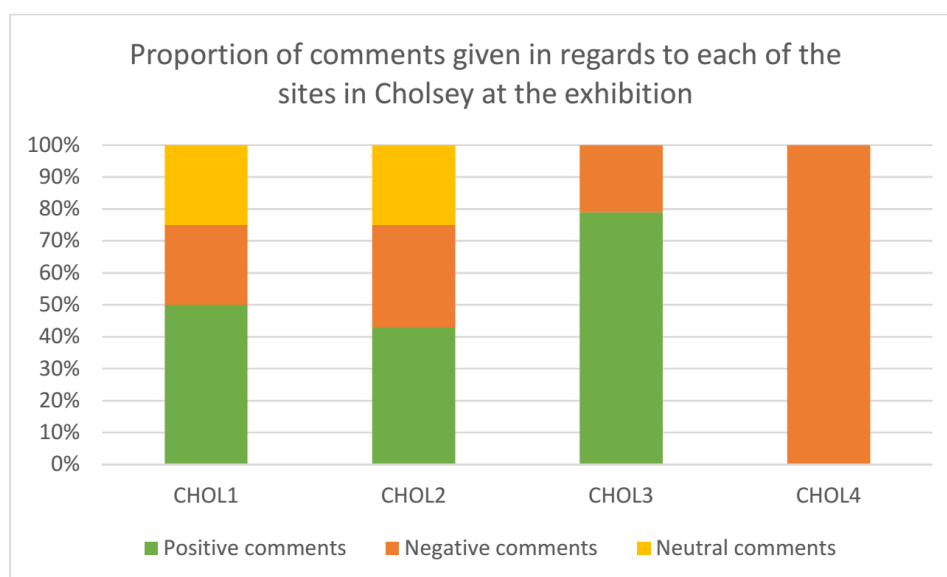
There was a great range of general comments given. A number of people suggested how the housing could be provided, suggestions included: redeveloping houses at Celsea Place, providing retirement housing and bungalows, and having one cohesive development. A couple of consultees also noted that development could affect those living on Rothwells Close and it was suggested that those residents should be given opportunity to buy the land. The most widely discussed topic was the roads, consultees suggested that more car parking should be provided in various places, highlighted roads that need improvements and could suffer from high amounts of traffic, and suggested that the cycle way on Reading Road to Wallingford should be finished. Other comments also were that the amount of new houses would be too much, that the SHMA is flawed and that a free school should be established.

In terms of the comments given about the sites in Cholsey, the site which received the most comments was CHOL2 and the site which received the least was CHOL4. The most favourable site was CHOL3 as this one received the greatest number of positive comments and greatest proportion of positive to negative comments. The positive comments given about CHOL3 included:

- it would be able to fully meet the housing target for Cholsey,
- it is the best fit to the village,
- the development could include a nursery or doctors surgery,
- it would help to link Cholsey and Fairmile together, and
- it would integrate with the village in terms of cycling and walking provision.



**Figure 7: Graph showing the number of comments given in regards to each of the sites in Cholsey at the public exhibition.**



**Figure 8: Graph showing the proportion of comments given in regards to each of the sites in Cholsey at the public exhibition.**

## CONSULTATION EXHIBITION IN CROWMARSH

The exhibition held in Crowmarsh was well attended and around 60 comments were made on the day.

The sites that received the highest number of comments were CRO6 and CRO7. CRO6 received a mix of responses, some in support of this site and some against. The comments raised most frequently were: concern over traffic/access onto Old Reading Road; the site is not too large; it is close to the village; what will happen to the caravan park (in relation to this some respondents said that tourism was important and should be encouraged).

The comments made in relation to CRO7 can be summarised as: concern over the impact on AONB/ the site is very visible; the site is too big; sewerage problems need sorting; it would need a footpath along Old Reading Road.

The comments made in relation to site CRO2 can be summarised as: the site is too big, and it should be in the AONB. One comment said that housing and employment should go here.

General comments made that didn't relate to a specific site can be summarised as:

- Need homes for downsizers
- School drop off parking is a worry
- Noise from RAF Benson
- Make plans for visitors and tourism
- Promote self-build
- Have smaller developments

In response to the question 'If the Council released the [council offices] site, what uses would you like to see here?', the most common answers were housing, employment and a hotel.

In response to the question 'Would it change your view on the housing sites we've shortlisted? (CR06 + CR07)', the answers were: yes as you wouldn't need the shortlisted sites; and that CRO6 was still the best site.

## CONSULTATION EXHIBITION IN GORING

The Goring exhibition was very well attended and around 350 post-it notes were used by residents to leave their comments.

The sites that were most commented on were GOR1 and GOR11. GOR1 received both positive and negative comments, with the most frequent comment being that the access was good and that it would have the least impact on the village. On the other hand several comments were made that the site was too distant from the village centre and would therefore encourage car use.

GOR11 comments were generally not supportive of allocating this site, with the most frequent reasons given being: flooding; too far from school; dangerous traffic/access; impact on wildlife; impact on countryside/AONB; loss of amenity value.

GOR2 received mixed comments with some support for this site and some opposition. The main issue raised was concern over access and road safety.

GOR4 received mixed comments, with some respondents commenting that this area of Goring was already over-developed; that the access was dangerous and the site had ecological value. Others felt that this site was suitable for a small number of homes.

GOR9 received a high number comments, particularly as it isn't one of the shortlisted sites. Most of the comments in relation to this site were that it should be reconsidered as a potential housing site as it has the least impact on the community, the school could be relocated there and it is close to the station. Some respondents also thought that sites GOR10 and GOR12 should be reconsidered.

General comments that didn't relate to a specific site can be summarised as:

- Concern over impact on schools
- Concern over impact on medical facilities
- Lack of infrastructure
- Need for smaller properties (for downsizing)
- 105 homes too many for Goring
- Tree planting important
- Concern over impact on roads
- Goring needs a neighbourhood plan
- Housing should be spread across several sites

#### CONSULTATION EXHIBITION IN NETTLEBED

The exhibition held in Nettlebed was well attended, although not everyone chose to leave comments on the day, preferring to look at the information on display and taking home a questionnaire to complete later on.

Of the comments left on the day, NET1 received the majority of comments with most people objecting to this site. The reasons given were: that it would create a 'ghetto'; it is distant from village; access would have to go across common land; the impact on wildlife.

The site that received the most support was NET3 as this was seen to have the least impact on the village. A number of people commented that NET5 – Joyce Grove was the 'obvious choice'.

In terms of general comments not specific to a site, the impact on school places in the village was raised.

## **What happens next?**

We will use the responses to this consultation help prepare a 'Preferred Options' document. This document will show options for site allocations and new policies that we've considered and which ones we plan to take forward. In producing the Preferred Options document we'll test options through sustainability appraisal, looking at their traffic and landscape impact, at the need for schools, outdoor recreation and other facilities, and check their deliverability.

We intend to carry out the Preferred Options consultation in the autumn of 2015 – we have updated our Local Development Scheme to reflect the fact that our overall Local Plan timetable has been extended to take account of planning for unmet housing need from the City of Oxford. We are also updating our Statement of Community Involvement, to reflect the lessons learned from this and other consultations, and to ensure that we continue to reach people in efficient and effective ways.

We hope that you will continue to take part in our consultations – our Local Plan 2031 will only truly be successful if it is grounded in and shaped by the knowledge, understanding and ambitions of the community across South Oxfordshire.



## Appendix 1 – Housing Option response maps



Figure 9: Map showing the origin of respondent comments to Q7 (Benson sites).









Figure 11: Map showing the origin of respondent comments to Q9 (Cholsey sites).





**Figure 12: Map showing the origin of respondent comments to Q10 (Crowmarsh Gifford sites).**





**Figure 13: Map showing the origin of respondent comments to Q11 (Goring sites).**



